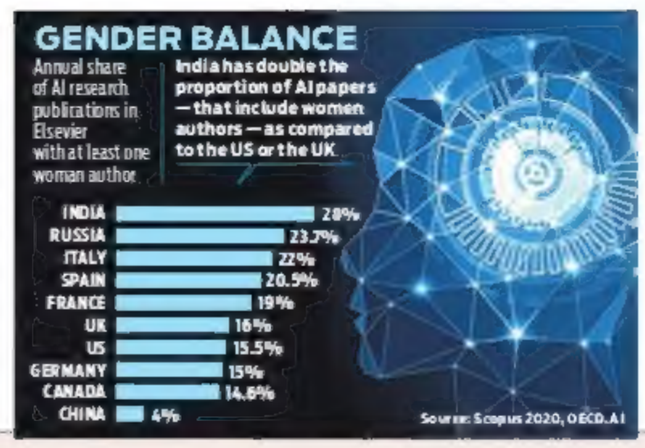
THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • DECEMBER 24, 2021 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 56 • LATE CITY EDITION


GENDER BALANCE
Annual share of AI research publications in Elsevier with at least one woman author
India has double the proportion of AI papers — that include women authors — as compared to the US or the UK
INDIA 28%
RUSSIA 23.7%
ITALY 22%
SPAIN 20.5%
FRANCE 19%
UK 16%
US 15.5%
GERMANY 15%
CANADA 14.6%
CHINA 4%
Source: Scopus 2020, OECD.AI

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BENGALURU AMONG TOP FIVE DIVERSE A.I. CITIES GLOBALLY

A ranking finds the city's talent pool for artificial intelligence workers to be second largest in the world & fifth most diverse

HIGHER DIVERSITY COULD DRAW RECRUITERS

One of the biggest challenges in the AI sector is the shortage of skilled workers. And, as the Harvard Business Review (HBR) points out, cities that have a more diverse talent pool — in terms of gender and race along with migrant acceptance and cost of living — are essential to make AI more ethical and inclusive, given its growing importance in our lives | **P2**

MORE DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED

- Hyderabad, New Delhi and Mumbai also figure in HBR's ranking of the top 50 AI cities, though the publication says Indian cities are constrained by their level of "digital evolution and infrastructure"
- San Francisco is No.1 in the ranking, beating New York and Seattle by a big margin in terms of talent pool, investments and diversity

3-fold

INDIA IS HIRING THREE TIMES MORE A.I. DEVELOPERS THAN IT DID IN 2017

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

BJP MLC WANTS BILL REFERRED TO SELECT COMMITTEE

BJP MLC A H Vishwanath, who has opposed the passage of the anti-conversion Bill, has demanded that it be referred to a Joint Select Committee | **P4**

CHRISTIAN SHRINE VANDALISED IN CHIKKABALLAPUR DISTRICT

A statue of St Anthony was vandalised by miscreants at Susaipalya village in Chikkaballapur district on Thursday. Police have registered a case | **P4**

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai speaks at the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi on Thursday | SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Anti-conversion Bill passed in Assembly amid uproar

Opposition puts up vociferous protest, Council test ahead

NAUSHAD BIJAPUR @ Belagavi

KARNATAKA has become the ninth state in the country to pass the anti-conversion Bill which has come under severe criticism from various quarters. Amid huge opposition and uproar by Congress legislators, The Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Bill-2021 was passed by voice vote in the Assembly on the penultimate day of the winter session, being held at the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi.

The Assembly adopted the Bill even as Congress legislators rushed to the well of the House in protest, terming it as draconian and unconstitutional. During a marathon debate on the Bill through the day, several top leaders of the Congress, JDS and BJP were engaged in a war of words over which government first came up with a plan to draft such a Bill and get it passed in the legislature.

When the debate was initiated by Opposition leader Siddaramaiah, who termed the Bill as unconstitutional and draconian, Law Minister J C Madhuswamy intervened to recall that it was the Congress government, headed by Siddaramaiah, which took the initiative to come up with an anti-conversion Bill in 2016 for the first time.

The Law Minister said, "A similar Bill was drafted by the Law Commission when Siddaramaiah was CM and the Bill also was brought before the Screening Committee and eventually before the State Cabinet. We have made some changes to it and tabled it in the Assembly."

CONTINUED ON: P4

Central teams to strengthen Omicron fight

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Union Government will send Central teams to states with low Covid-19 vaccination, rising cases and insufficient health infrastructure to assist them, it was decided in a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday to review the situation in the country.

The PM directed officials to ensure that the health systems in the states, beginning from the district level, are strengthened to meet any challenge posed by the Omicron variant whose total case count crossed 300 in India.

It is important for states to ensure that oxygen supply equipment is installed and fully functional, he instructed, also urging officials to work with states on a regular basis and review the status of preparedness of various components of health infrastructure.

Earlier, the Union Health ministry proposed a five-point strategy to tackle any future Covid wave in the wake of the Omicron outbreak, including subjecting samples from any cluster to whole genome sequencing to identify the presence of the strain and quickly press in necessary measures.

In a review meeting with states, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan reiterated the need to impose night curfews and ensure strict regulation of large gatherings, especially ahead of the forthcoming festivities.

CONTINUED ON: P9

STATE ASKED TO FOCUS ON COVID CLUSTERS

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA has been told to focus on the increase in clusters with the highly transmissible Omicron variant being detected, and also manage the Covid-19 situation effectively.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan reviewed the public preparedness of states for fighting Covid-19 and the Omicron variant along with the progress of vaccination with Health Secretaries and National Health Mission (NHM) MDs of states and UTs via video conference on Thursday. Following this, a five-fold strategy including instructions on containment measures, testing and surveillance, clinical management, Covid-safe behaviour and vaccination strategies were advised.

CONTINUED ON: P5

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
Dec 22 62,70,380 doses
Dec 23 51,73,933 doses
TOTAL: 1,40,24,47,022

NATION WIDE	DEC 22	DEC 23
Fresh cases	6,317	7,495
Recoveries	6,906	6,960
Deaths	318	434

KARNATAKA	DEC 22	DEC 23
Fresh cases	321	299
Recoveries	253	318
Deaths	4	2

EXPRESS READ

Deadline to apply for SSLC exam extended

Bengaluru: Following requests from parents and students, the deadline to apply for the SSLC main examination has been extended. The deadline for students details to be uploaded on the portal by schools has been extended from December 27 to Januaray 10, 2022. Examination fees can now be paid between January 12 and 17.

Security personnel looking for clues at the Ludhiana district court complex on Thursday | PTI

1 dead in Punjab court blast

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

ONE person was killed and five others, including two women, were injured in a bomb explosion at the Ludhiana district court complex on Thursday. Sources said the bomb may have gone off while it was being assembled. "One body has been recovered, but it is yet to be identified. Probably, the person was carrying the explosives," Ludhiana Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said, adding that he is the prime suspect. A DNA test will be conducted on the unidentified body. All the five injured are out of danger.

Police have registered a case against unknown persons under various charges including sedition.

CONTINUED ON: P10